mudir, "exiled," in his own words, to the country, must account for a nahiya or sub-district, in this case with an average population of some 10,000 souls, with a staff of a few tax-assessors, clerks, a police detachment and servants which together usually numbers less than 30 or 40 men, less than 1/250th of such a population. 647 648 [625]

The lot of the typical mudir is not an enviable one. His chief tasks are those of the great trinity of Middle Eastern administration, the maintenance of order, the collection of taxes, and the selection of army recruits. Because these three demand most of his time and energy, other problems, such as public health, must suffer in comparison. The government headquarters in the central village of a nahiya is usually a decrepit one-storey outpost of mud-brick or rubble, built about an unpaved courtyard. It contains some offices, a guardroom and quarters for the police, and a primitive jail, and boasts neither plumbing, heating, or electricity. The mudir himself is assigned a house, but he can rarely have more than the minimum in furnishings, just as he usually cannot yet afford marriage. He is most often a younger man from 25 to 35 years of age, a lawyer by training, and in high hopes of some better favoured assignment. Moreover, he finds himself an alien in the community, not only because his origins are elsewhere, but also because his social rank does not seem to admit of free intercourse with those he governs. There are, to be sure, mudirs who take a great part in the social life of their nahiyas, but [344] [697]

they are most often older, more experienced men with wife and family. While given a free hand, the mudir is still often on the telephone to Rowanduz, if only to hear the voices of his fellow civil servants, and failing leave to visit Baghdad, Mosul, or some other center of "civilization," seeks every opportunity to find their company in the center itself. "Here I am," said one mudir, "in this village where there is no club, no restaurant, no cinema, and no friends. And after sundown it's all finished."

The mudir and his problems will be found again later, for it is necessary here to return to Rowanduz itself and the more important question of the area as a whole. Of the several government buildings in Rowanduz, that which commands primary attention, as it does of the inhabitants of the district, is the serai, so termed after Ottoman custom, for it contains the offices of the qaimmaqam and most of his staff, and is the physical center of the district government. The serai is one of the first buildings to be encountered in the town, standing a hundred yards from the edge of the bluff and commanding a magnificent view of the valley. It is a large, dun-colored, rectangular structure of plastered brick surrounding a partially paved interior court wherein a few ragged trees are to be found. The front of the building is of two storeys, unlike the other three sides which are of one, and is pierced by a large, arched gateway where one or two policemen mount guard during the day. Within the arch is a long brick bench on which a

little collection of arms--rifles, bandoliers, Shenzis (the curved Kurdish dagger)--may often be seen, because men with business in the court are disarmed on entering and may reclaim their weapons after their departure. The roofs are of earth thickly plastered and rolled on supporting joists of bundled poles and twigs, and on them tufts of grass have found a foothold. In summer the policemen on duty at night take up their station in a corner of the roof.

The offices of the court open on the inner courtyard. There are but a few loopholes in the outer wall of the first storey, and the interior windows and those of the second storey facing the valley are glassed and barred. The walls within are plastered, but the ceiling consists of bare branches and poles which support the roof. The floors are of tamped earth. The furniture--desks, chairs, and long, high wooden benches--is unpainted, while a few offices boast upholstered easy-chairs. Cases, desks, and convenient corners are occupied with stacks of dossiers and loosely-pinned papers. Everything is written by hand, for there are no typewriters. In the corner of every office stands the omnipresent grey water-jug with a glass turned down over its mouth. There is no electric lighting, and the rare work which demands attention after dark must be done by kerosene or gasoline lanterns. A few of the rooms are equipped with stoves in wintertime. Directly across the courtyard from the gateway is the jail, its inner wall

there are many malingerers. The legal remedy for evasion, whenever detected, is simply the extension of the term of duty. There are, to be sure, many Kurds of middle and upper-class families who, on the completion of their secondary schooling, select the not unpleasant and honorable career of an army officer.

For the people of the district the serai, with its important complement of officials, its bustling crowd during hours of business, its guards, and its four-colored ensign fluttering above from a flagpole, is the physical symbol of governmental authority. "The serai prefers this," or "the serai would never permit that," is heard in popular speech.

[illegible] of oppression, but of sorrow, for in lorries drawn up before its gateway depart the groups of recruits and prisoners bound for Erbil, and the people know that many will never return. There is always a number of women to be found outside the serai, old and young, mothers and wives, dressed in the stained, dark cloth of the countryside, and often one will raise her voice in a low-pitched lament or fall into tears. An enterprising Rowanduz has set up an antique camera at one corner, and the prisoner and recruit often exchange photographs with their wives, the poorly-made prints that are so often brought out during the long months of separation.

To one side of the serai, on one of the two streets leading up into the town, is a small, square brick building

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[232]

which houses the office of the government veterinarian, behind which a fenced yard usually contains one or two animals, horses or mules, under treatment. Directly behind this, across the street from a corner of the serai, is the "government" chaykhaneh (tea-room), a 265
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dilapidated mud-brick building with a porch of tamped earth over which in summer is erected a wooden framework roofed with a thick canopy of oak leaves and branches. Beneath this arbor (in the style of a kenif, Kurdish for such a construction) are arranged a number of high [352]
wooden benches and tables, occupied for refreshment or [517]
ease during the day by those who have had business in the serai, policemen off duty, a chieftain's bodyguards, or the usual loafers.

To the other side of the serai stands a squat, cement- 344
block building, the "communications" office wherein the 205
post-office, telegraph, and telephone switchboard are to 206
be found. The postmaster, in 1951 a heavy-set Chaldean 655
(Nestori, a member of the Christian sect centering around Khoi), has several assistants hired from among the town-people and one or more of them is on duty day and night. While the post and the telegraph can be handled with efficiency, the telephone equipment leaves much to be desired, and to place a call to such a place as Erbil or Baghdad often requires a good deal of shouting and cranking. It follows that the operators may times suffer considerable frustration, and, unlike other government

installations in Rowanduz, the air of the communications office is heavy with tobacco smoke and its floor littered with cigarettes. Because of the importance of his task, the postmaster works in close touch with the qaimmaqam.

Some distance up the street leading to the left past the serai, next to the police detachment's quarters, is the Tobacco Monopoly, a large, barn-like structure, which, in addition to warehouse space, contains a few offices. One of the qaimmaqam's most important subordinates is the director of this monopoly. As in other countries, tobacco in Iraq offers a lucrative source of government revenue, particularly the tax on cigarettes, and is one of the most important cash crops of the Rowanduz district. The government controls the distribution of seed and purchases all of the crop from the cultivators after the harvest, a control which eliminates the profiteering of middlemen and at the same time assures itself a respectable profit. The harvested leaf is transmitted to the cigarette factories in Baghdad. The leaf grown in the Rowanduz district is typically small and extremely friable, but the government has introduced certain better strains of late. Cultivators or their overlords may retain small quantities of the harvest for their own consumption, usually prepared as cigarettes by hand within the households.

Across from the Tobacco Monopoly and police detachment, occupying a detached slope of land overlooking the gorge, is a single-storey cement-block hospital and several outbuildings

buildings. The hospital itself contains two free wards for the district, although much is lacking in modern equipment and drugs, and is under the direction of a medical officer, also subordinate to the kaimmakam. There are several assistants, including a female nurse. Medical service in the district is in some disrepute, largely because of the character of the medical officer. Trained in Lebanon, he was characterized as having expensive cures for expensive patients, and none at all for others. A poor merchant who had taken his infant, afflicted with a rash, to this doctor was presumptorily told "to wash his baby more often," hardly a prescription of value as the child was bathed daily. In another case, a countryman with some complaint entered the doctor's office while the latter was in conference with a visitor to the district. When the countryman asked for the doctor, this person himself informed the sufferer that "the doctor was not there, and would not be expected for several days." Such unfortunate incidents, coupled with the fact that Arab physicians trained in the Middle East often use surgery as a panacea, have created a large body of adverse opinion.

Among a group of houses in the lower part of the town are to be found the courthouse and residence of the judge (Arabic, hakim), the former a small, squarish mud-brick building of a single storey. When court is in session, there is usually a small number of villagers or townspeople squatting or leaning against its front wall, waiting to be called. The judge is the foremost of several

in the primary schools, and about 35 in the intermediate school. All of the children live in Rowandus itself, for there is no system of transportation for the children in outlying villages. 372

The primary school for boys is a large, mud-brick building standing within a wide gravel yard behind the serai. Constructed in 1925, it is in considerable disrepair today. Within it a number of classrooms open on a small central hall. There are diminutive rooms for the teachers and the director, a "library," and a closet wherein a servant prepares tea. The furnishings, forms and benches of unpainted wood, are the poorest, and the teachers fondly hope for the future construction of a new school with better equipment. The poorer students are furnished their texts, similarly bedraggled from years of use, while those of wealthier homes purchase their own. The primary school for girls is a short distance up the street, a smaller, square mud-brick building subsidized some years ago from private ownership. The intermediate school is to be found in the upper part of the town, a spacious single-storey structure of cement-block, completed in 1950. 344 [352] [372]

The several instructors of the girl's primary school are women. Those of the boy's primary school and intermediate school are men, numbering nine in all, including the three school directors. Because the Kurdish language is mandatory for beginning instruction, the teachers are either Muslim Kurds or Christians, Nestorians or Chaldeans, most of whom come from Erbil or Mosul. None 375

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a hillside, the roofs of the lower tiers serving as
yards for those above. The population of this community [162]
was estimated at about 150 adults. The individual house
is simple, its floor of tamped earth, its windows without
glass, no provision made for the escape of smoke from an [354]
indoor firepit save doors and windows, and its furnishings
meager. Water is obtained from a neighboring stream. This [312]
village boasts no specialized constructions and is without 366
shops. Larger villages, such as Batas or Dyana, have a
number of buildings for special purposes, for example, [344] [346]
the police post and the Nestorian church in Dyana, and a
definite mercantile section. Fields as well as house-yards 417
of the villagers are often marked out with extensive fences
of interlaced branches and thorns or of rubble. In the 231
smaller village described above, cattle and other domestic 342
animals were housed within the dwellings themselves during
cold weather, and in some locales in the area caves are
used as cattle-pens or sheep-folds in the winter. 361
"agglomerated" village pattern of rural occupation in the
Middle East and in Southern Europe has been noticed often,
but in the Rowandus district it is possible to find isolated
farm settlements of no more than one or two houses. 342
Kelebir, who do not winter in the area, use for shelter a
black goat-hair tent floored with rugs, in general appearance
not unlike that of Arab nomads, but less complex. Some of
these tents, such as those used by chieftains for summer
guest-houses, are quite spacious and of unique designs.

8: Leach E-S (1938) 1940 MA11 Kurd MA11
Rowanduz

CHAPTER 3

The Guest House

628 So far we have been mainly concerned with describing the relative social positions of the different individuals that go to make up the Kurdish tribal community. It is now necessary to consider these same relationships on an institutional plane and to examine more specifically the economic context in which they operate.

I have defined the position of the village Agha in functional terms as (a) the individual who 'owns' the land and who receives rent by virtue of that title and (b) the individual responsible for the upkeep of the Guest House. We must now examine this definition more carefully.

634 628 584 It is a cardinal feature of Kurdish custom that the stranger, whatever his rank and position, is entitled to free board and lodging at the expense of the Agha. The more lavish the Agha's hospitality the greater the esteem of his fellows; so much so that the prestige a man gains by virtue of being a good and generous host may in terms of reputation fully discount disadvantages of birth. Hamid Amin Agha of Rewanduz for example through only a poor man and a fairly distant cousin of the ruling chief of his clan has a tremendous reputation throughout the district simply on account of his hospitality. On all sides it was maintained that he was much more of a man (piaw - the Kurdish idiom is the same as our own) than his cousin overlord Sheikh Mohammed Agha of Balash. If Hamid Amin was not so generous, it was argued, he also would be rich and powerful; *Sheikh Mohammed was miserly and an old woman. It must be admitted that a mere reputation for generosity may not bring with it any particular tangible reward in the form of economic advantage or practical influence. But the pattern of the society is such that this form of reputation is esteemed above all others, and it is in the light of this set of values that the institution of the Guest House must be considered.

• 344 674 352 †In the Balik country the Guest House is seldom actually a house. Winter travellers are few and can be accommodated if necessary somewhere in the Agha's own residence; during the summer on the other hand a shady pergola is erected somewhere close to the Agha's house and furnished with carpets, seats and cushions. It is here that the traveller is expected to take his meals and sleep.

* This incidentally seems to have been Sheikh Mohammed's reputation throughout his life; see Hay p. 753).

† In the plains villages however the great heat of the summer and the greater frequency of winter travellers necessitates a permanent building for the Guest House. For description see Hay 47 - 49.